

Chamorro woman Attorney General; Rosa T. Aguigui Reyes was the first Chamorro woman elected to public office, as a member of the Guam Congress; Dr. Katherine B. Aguon was the first Chamorro woman to earn a doctor of philosophy degree and the first female vice speaker of the Guam Legislature; Cynthia Torres and Lagrimas Leon Guerrero Untalan were the first Chamorro women elected as senators, both serving in the 3rd Guam Legislature; and Asuncion Flores was the first Chamorro woman appointed member of the assembly of the Guam Congress.

These women in public service have been exemplary for the entire island and for our nation. I am truly honored to represent a district with such strong women leaders.

Historically, the women of Guam have always played an important role in Guam society. In pre-Western contact times, the Chamorro society was based on a matrilineal clan system in which women performed important and powerful roles in the lives of the people. Lineage was traced through the female line and it was the relationships via the mother which determined wealth, social standing and power. Even with the onset of Western contact which was patrilineal in nature (particularly from Spain), the Chamorro female retained much formal and informal power in Guam society. This has carried itself to the present and girls and women continue to be influential in some social settings and dominant in others. Openness to female leadership and women in influential roles have been part of the Guam scene in spite of Western contact.

We must also pay tribute to the women who I have not mentioned by name, yet who have also had a significant impact on our lives: working women, who fight for equal pay and non-discriminatory treatment; the women who stand up against domestic and family violence; the women who teach our children to become future leaders and the women who continue to learn in higher education institutions; the female community leaders who advocate for women's issues and for all important issues; lesbian women who are still fighting for the acceptance that they rightfully deserve. Last but not least, let us pay tribute to mothers, who provide love and direction so that our children are raised to become citizens with decency and values; single mothers, who make sacrifices every day so their children can live good lives; daughters, who grow up to become independent women of integrity and diligence; and wives, who provide companionship and stability.

These are the women we celebrate in March for Women's History Month, and these are the women we should celebrate all year round. I urge my colleagues to recognize Women's History Month, not only because women's history is key to American history, but because women have contributed so much to our nation through their strength, courage, and vision.

At this time, I would like to make note of the recent passing of a woman who has provided inspiration to all of the people of Guam, the Honorable Cynthia Johnston Torres. It is with a great sense of loss that we commemorate Senator Torres, a distinguished member of the Third Guam Legislature who passed away two days ago at the age of 89 on March 6, 2001.

Senator Torres is a noted figure in Guam politics. She holds the distinction of being one of the first women to be elected to public office

on the island of Guam. Along with Lagrimas L.G. Untalan, the late senator was elected to serve in the Third Guam Legislature in 1954. They were the first and only women elected to the Guam's unicameral Assembly during the first ten years of civil government on Guam. Although women had previously served as appointees to the Guam Congress, an advisory board to Guam's Naval governors during the first half of the last century, Senators Torres and Untalan's election marked the first time that women would serve as "elected" representatives to the people of Guam.

Foremost among the reasons behind the candidacy of Guam's first women senators were two specific objectives—these objectives were to define the character of Guam politics in the years to come. The candidates intended to set a precedent. They wanted to have Guam's women

The other objective set forth in the 1954 elections was to break the concept of block voting—a practice where an "X" placed by a voter on a large box within the ballot automatically casts votes for a certain party's slate of candidates. During the elections for the First and Second Guam Legislatures, the forerunner of the Guam Democratic Party, the Popular Party, was the only major political party in existence. Members of this party had absolute control of the First and Second Legislatures. In 1954, Senator Torres' election as an independent to the legislature earned her a prominent position which ensured leadership status when the Territorial Party—the forerunner of the Guam Republican Party—was formed in 1956. Guam voters have since been known to cross party lines and cast votes for candidates they feel most qualified rather than for party affiliations.

As a member of the Third Guam Legislature, Senator Torres played a vital role in the passage of important legislation—the most notable being Public Law 42, which established trial by jury in certain cases within the jurisdiction of the District Court of Guam. In addition to a wide range of bills which codified the island of Guam's administrative and corporate procedures, the establishment of the Guam Memorial Hospital, the only civilian hospital, took effect during the Senator's tenure.

Although undoubtedly a very distinguished political figure, Senator Torres left a more distinct mark in the field of education. Born on July 27, 1911, to William G. and Agueda Iglesias Johnston, the senator took a path not much different from the ones taken by her parents. As the daughter of prominent educators, her parents' profession led her to devote her life to the field of education. Having received training in California, Senator Torres returned to Guam in 1932 to be a teacher. She married a successful local entrepreneur, Jose Calvo Torres, shortly thereafter. Mr. Torres passed away in 1946. The Senator took over his business ventures and quickly became a respected member of the local business community.

Having noted the lack of educational opportunities for Guam's handicapped children, Senator Torres decided to sell her business interests in 1958 in order to pursue a degree in elementary and special education. Upon completing her Master's Degree at the University of California in San Diego, she came back to Guam to become a consultant for the island's only school for the physically and men-

tally handicapped children. She later became its principal. Under her direction, the school developed and implemented educational and vocational programs which she added to the customary custodial care provided by the school to handicapped children.

She retired from government service in 1975 and, in recent years, has served the community through her involvement in civic organizations. She was a member of the University of Guam Board of Regents, the Guam Economic Development Authority, the Marianas Association of Retired Citizens. She was a co-founder and charter member of the Guam Lytico-Bodig Association, she has served as chair to the Guam Memorial Hospital's Board of Trustees and she was a past-president of the Guam Association of Retired Persons.

For all her work and accomplishments, Senator Torres was conferred numerous awards and commendations. She has received several commendations from the Guam Legislature including Resolution 282 from the 20th Guam Legislature which recognized and commended her love and service for the people of Guam. In addition, she was also awarded an honorary Doctor of Law Degree from the University of Guam in 1981 and the Distinguished Leadership Award from the American Biographical Institute for Outstanding Education.

Senator Cynthia Johnston Torres leaves a great legacy of service and devotion to the island and people of Guam. A pioneer in the field of politics and education, her endeavors and accomplishments provide inspiration to the men and women of Guam. As we mourn her passing, her perseverance and energy will forever live in our hearts.

Adios, Senator Torres, yan gof dangkalo na si Yu'os Ma'ase ginen todos I taotaon Guam. You are an inspiration to the people of Guam and to our nation. During Women's History Month and beyond, we will celebrate your life and your legacy.

THE "VETERANS AMERICAN
DREAM HOMEOWNERSHIP AS-
SISTANCE ACT"

HON. WALLY HERGER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 8, 2001

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join with my Ways and Means colleague Congressman KLECZKA in introducing the Veterans American Dream Homeownership Assistance Act. This very worthy legislation will help veterans in five states, including California, to achieve their dream of home ownership.

Five states—Wisconsin, California, Texas, Oregon, and Alaska—have a program in which the states issue tax-exempt bonds to finance home mortgage loans to veterans. Under a little-known provision in the 1984 tax bill, veterans living in those five states who began military service after 1976 are prohibited from receiving a state-financed veterans home mortgage.